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CITY OFFICIALS JOIN CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY TO CELEBRATE THE OPENING OF CHICAGO BEE BRANCH

Chicago Public Library Commissioner Brian Bannon joined 3rd Ward Alderman Pat Dowell and city officials to cut the ribbon on the re-opening of the Chicago Bee library branch. The \$2.32 million project, funded by Chicago Housing Authority, in the Bronzeville community included renovating two floors of the three-story historic property to improve library services.

"The newly renovated Chicago Bee library branch is not only a commemoration of Bronzeville's history, it is a nod to what is to come in the community," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "Chicago Bee will write the next chapter in its history, providing residents with 21st century services that will help the entire community succeed for generations to come."

The rehabilitation project included a gut interior renovation and expansion of library services to the second floor of the building, a build-out of an early learning play space for children and families, a YOUmedia area for teens, and new furniture, finishes and equipment. The exterior public-facing terra cotta façade was completely repaired and refinished, and the exterior storefront was replaced to appear close to the historical look of the original building.

"These Chicago Bee renovations are bringing the best in library services to the Bronzeville community," said Library Commissioner Brian Bannon. "We are thrilled to be able to reopen this branch where families and people of all ages come together to read, learn and connect."

CPL's award-winning 21st century library services will continue to serve all ages of the community. The branch now features an early learning play space, equipped with resources to help parents better support their child's reading and development. Families will also be able to access a Teacher in the Library for in person homework help. The YOUmedia digital media and lab space allows teens to connect with skilled mentors to explore career opportunities, hang out, and foster interests in art, technology, gaming, music, making and more. Traditional library programs, such as book clubs and educational and cultural programming will also be offered in the expanded space. Computer classes and one-on-one coaching to build digital literacy, technology and job-seeking skills for adults and seniors will be offered.

"Our support for the Bee Branch will ensure that everyone in the community will benefit from a modern library experience with services and programs for everyone from children to seniors," said

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Eugene E. Jones, Jr. CEO of the Chicago Housing Authority. “This is another example of how CHA is providing community amenities that complement our housing developments.”

The 3-story landmark building at 3647 S. State Street is the former home of The Chicago Bee, an African American newspaper published for the Bronzeville community from 1925-1947. An editor of the Bee, James Gentry, coined the term “Bronzeville” to describe the newly arriving African Americans from the South and the vibrant South Side neighborhood that was the center of black business and culture in the city at the time. Chicago Public Library began operating the Chicago Bee branch in 1996.

“Chicago Bee is a community anchor in our community, and I am thrilled to see how these renovations will spark growth in residents across Bronzeville,” said Alderman Pat Dowell, 3rd Ward. “Over the last week, children have been peering into the window excited about the new changes the library will bring. I want to thank Mayor Emanuel, Commissioner Bannon, and CHA for working with me to invest in a facility so integral to the success of our future generations.”

Chicago Bee supports continued investments and development in the Bronzeville community, including the Williams Park fieldhouse, Ellis Park Arts and Recreation center, the Parade of Homes residential housing initiative and retail including the Mariano’s grocery store. Transportation investments include five bridges led by the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), including the Oakwood Boulevard Bridge and a new pedestrian and bike bridge at 41st Street over South Lake Shore Drive. Construction of the 31st Street, 39th Street and 43rd Street Bridges are currently underway.

The family day celebration at Chicago Bee branch will be held on Saturday, December 15. Activities planned include hands-on science activities with Mad Science Chicago, a children's drum circle with Lenny Marsh and a spoken word performance by Poetry Soulchild.

This is part of the CPL “Branching Out: Building Libraries, Building Communities” initiative to develop and modernize community libraries throughout the city. Branching Out focuses on investing in key areas of neighborhood libraries including: modern facilities and infrastructure, and high quality programming with librarians and administrators. Since 2011, 6 new libraries have been built, significant updates have been made at 14 branches and more than \$250 million in new investments have been made. By 2019, an additional 5 new libraries will be built, and renovations at 4 libraries will be complete.

About Chicago Public Library

Since 1873, Chicago Public Library (CPL) has encouraged lifelong learning by welcoming all people and offering equal access to information, entertainment and knowledge through innovative services and programs, as well as cutting-edge technology. Through its 80 locations, the Library provides free access to a rich collection of materials, both physical and digital, and presents the highest quality author discussions, exhibits and programs for children, teens and adults. CPL received the Social Innovator Award from Chicago Innovation Awards; won a National Medal for Library Services from the Institute for Museum and Library Services; and was ranked number one in the U.S. and third in the world by an international study of major urban libraries conducted by the Heinrich Heine University Dusseldorf in Germany. For more information, please call (312) 747-4050 or visit chipublib.org.